

IOWA'S CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING

NETWORK MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL IOWA STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA – THIRD GRADE READING

Des Moines Early Grade Success efforts are led by United Way in collaboration with other community partners and include strategies in the following areas:

- » School Readiness
- » Early Grade Reading
- » Parent and Family Engagement
- » Out of School Time
- » Chronic Absence

Four programs with promising results and expanded support from United Way of Central Iowa are highlighted below.

WLC VOLUNTEER READING PROGRAM

In order to support United Way of Central Iowa's commitment to children beginning school ready to learn, the Women's Leadership Connection developed the Early Childhood Reading Initiative in collaboration with the Early Enrichment Child Care Center of Oakridge Neighborhood Services, in November 2011. The purpose of the program was to engage Women's Leadership Connection members as volunteer "reading buddies" to meet weekly with children in order to increase print literacy skills.

The United Way of Central Iowa selected the *Engaging Children with Print* curriculum in collaboration with Des Moines Public Schools early childhood literacy staff. These staff members provided input and support to the program design and volunteer training, including providing a presentation and read-aloud example during both volunteer trainings. The DMPS early literacy staff were also instrumental in identifying and recommending the assessment tool utilized to measure program outcomes. Finally, DMPS staff members were key in helping to design the program structure; including books utilized, number of books read each week, and the length and frequency of volunteer sessions.

Project Partners

- » United Way of Central Iowa
- » Women's Leadership Connection
- » Des Moines Public Schools
- » Oakridge Early Enrichment Center



EARLY GRADE READING GRANTS

In the spring of 2012 the UWCI Education cabinet awarded 6 early grade reading grants to Polk County school districts. The grants were awarded to districts based upon their proposals to improve 3rd grade reading scores within their districts. Examples of grants that were awarded include writing kits, bi-lingual books for family literacy nights, purchase of non-fiction materials for classroom libraries, I-pads for use with title 1 schools, purchase of ELMOs to enhance visual instruction for grades 1 and 2, support for additional English Language Learner teachers.

Priority was given to districts with high percentages of free and reduced price lunch students, high numbers of students below proficiency, alignment with Iowa Core. Results from the first round of grants will be reviewed this spring.



Project Partners

Polk County School Districts:

- » Des Moines Public
- » Perry
- » Saydel
- » South East Polk
- » Urbandale
- » West Des Moines
- » United Way of Central Iowa

OUT OF SCHOOL TIME INITIATIVE

Iowa is committed to investing in high-quality out-of-school time programming to promote early grade reading proficiency and, more long-term, increase the percentage of students graduating from high school on-time. UWCI seeks to improve the availability, accessibility and quality of programs offered outside the classroom and in the summer to include best practice language, literacy, science and math components that complement school curricula and meet the developmental needs of students.

To establish a baseline of data before proceeding with extensive planning, an inventory of available out-of-school time (OST) opportunities was completed for the three county service areas. To collect stakeholder input regarding out-of-school time programming, three focus groups were conducted in each county of its service area: Dallas, Polk, and Warren counties.

An initial meeting of a time-limited Task Force of out-of-school time providers was convened to provide leadership and vision for the initiative. This small group representing each county of the service area provided good insight on the initiative's early activities and provided especially beneficial input regarding next steps. Discussion identified the following initial strategic framework to support high-quality out-of-school time in Central Iowa:

- » Increase Availability, Accessibly, and Quality of OST Programs
- » Provide program support and enrichment to out-of-school time programs in the form of coaching, peer-to-peer mentoring and training. Look at program-specific areas of improvement and create sustained access to high quality learning opportunities. Promote staff quality through customized professional development.
- » Provide Access to Research-Based Curricula and Materials that Promote Academic Enrichment
- » Provide out-of-school time programs access to high-quality materials that support children's exploration and promote an environment for learning enrichment. The out-of-school time setting offers children flexibility to explore and investigate freely and creatively.
- » Increase Collaboration and Coordination
- » Increase coordination, cooperation, and communication amongst OST programs to promote linkages between programs and schools and help with development and measurement of common metrics. Broker relationships between schools and community-based programs.
- » Decrease Summer Learning Loss
- » Increase the number of providers and programs offering high-quality summer learning programs to young people living in poverty.

In addition to the inventory and framework the United Way of Central Iowa Education Cabinet approved a process for awarding grants to existing Out of School time programs that are strengthening their academic partnerships and focus.

Project Partners

- » Boys and Girls Club
- » Camp Fire USA
- » Children and Family Urban Ministries
- » Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa
- » KidsWest – WDMCS
- » Oakridge Neighborhood Services
- » State Public Policy Group
- » Wilkie House
- » United Way of Central Iowa
- » YMCA
- » Young Women's Resource Center

DATA SHARING

A partnership between United Way of Central Iowa the Des Moines Public School District and funded non-profit community partners is underwa to implement a new collaborative data sharing process. As outlined in a newly executed Memorandum of Agreement, agencies serving Des Moines Public Schools' students and receiving United Way of Central Iowa funding will work to secure parental permission to share specific student level data (of students participating in UWCI funded programs) with United Way of Central Iowa. Once parental permission is received United Way of Central Iowa will receive disaggregated student data and provide the performance measure data back to United Way staff and volunteers in the form of program reports. This process will promote collective accountability for community results related to United Way's education goals. In particular this effort will be tracking students who are absent nine or more days per year.

Project Partners

- » Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Iowa
- » Children and Family Urban Ministries
- » Des Moines Public Schools
- » Employee and Family Resources
- » Isiserettes
- » Oakridge Neighborhood Services
- » United Way of Central Iowa
- » Wilkie House



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Priority Actions Toward Goal 2012-2013 EDUCATION

